

Mayor's Message



*South Gippsland
Shire Council*

Our swimming pools are much more than places to swim. For generations, they have been places where children have learned to swim, families have spent summer days together, clubs trained and competed, and communities connected.

Many of South Gippsland's outdoor pools were built through the extraordinary efforts of volunteers, swimming clubs and local communities. That history has created lasting connections between these facilities and the towns they serve. For many people, local pools are an important part of community identity.

Conversations about the future of valued community facilities are never easy. However, Council also has a responsibility to be open about the challenges facing the assets we share.

South Gippsland has six Council-managed aquatic facilities: five outdoor pools and our indoor facility. Most are ageing, and several require significant investment to remain safe, reliable and fit for purpose.

Over the next 15 years, the estimated cost to operate, maintain and renew these facilities is approximately \$78 million. Council's Long-Term Financial Plan provides \$37 million for aquatic operations, maintenance and capital investment, leaving an estimated funding gap of \$41 million.

At the same time, operating costs are rising, while attendance at some facilities is low and declining. The aquatic funding gap alone is more than twice Council's annual capital works budget and more than two-and-a-half times its available reserves. Much of those reserves are already committed to emergency preparedness and existing infrastructure projects.

This challenge must also be considered alongside Council's wider asset responsibilities. Much of our general asset base is ageing and requires ongoing maintenance and renewal. In that context, it may not be possible to bridge the full \$41 million aquatic funding gap.

No decisions have been made about the future of any pool. However, we need an honest community conversation about what is financially sustainable for South Gippsland and what aquatic services should look like in the years ahead. That discussion will ultimately need to consider Council's broader infrastructure commitments as well.

The conversation may involve difficult options, including whether Council can continue operating all six facilities in their current form.



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We recognise that the pool's value cannot be measured only by attendance numbers or cost per visit. Pools provide social, health, recreation and community benefits. However, Council must share the financial realities as we seek practical solutions and understand what residents value most.

That is why we are asking you to have your say. Whether you are a regular pool user, take your children swimming occasionally, belong to a swimming club, or do not use these facilities, your perspective matters.

Council has released information each pool's condition, use and investment needs. We encourage residents to review this information carefully and provide considered feedback.

This is not a decision being made behind closed doors. It is the beginning of a community-wide conversation about the future of aquatic facilities across South Gippsland.

Please read the information, consider the challenges and share your views.

Feedback closes Sunday 6 December 2026 and will be accepted via Council's website or via a hard copy survey form. Please note that comments made on social media page or posts cannot be recorded as formal feedback or submissions in this process.